



Israel Studies International MA Program

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Jews, Judaism and Jewish Nationalism in Modern Times

Prof. Arie Saposnik

Spring Semester 2023

Tuesday, 16:30-18:00

**Sde Boker Campus, The Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of
Israel and Zionism**

Course Description:

The state of Israel was founded based on the notion that the Jews worldwide constitute a nation, and that they are hence deserving of a nation-state. This was not necessarily a self-evident proposition to all. Modern Zionism—the Jewish national movement that sought the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine—emerged in the nineteenth century as one among a wide array of Jewish responses to the challenges of modernity. Some of these responses understood Judaism, or Jewishness, to be based in a common nationhood. Zionism, in other words, was for many years one among a variety of Jewish national ideas and projects. Other Jewish responses to modernity understood (and sought to recast) the essence of Judaism, or Jewishness, in different terms—as based in religion, class, or civilization, for example. Some of these movements and ideas evinced differing degrees of sympathy or indifference to the idea of Jewish nationhood; others were passionately opposed, and even hostile, to such notions.

This course seeks to understand the emergence of the idea (or ideas) of Jewish nationalism, how it understood its relationship to the Jewish past, and its vision of a Jewish future. Moreover, it will attempt to chart the ways in which Jewish national activists of various stripes sought to construct an actual Jewish nation and grant the Jews a national life.

Course Requirements:

- Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively. Participation, of course, must be based on consistent reading of the relevant materials for each given meeting. The class will be conducted seminar-style, and all students are

expected to be active participants and to prepare points for discussion of the reading material.

- Midterm paper (30%): A midterm paper based on questions that I will provide will be due May 23.
The Midterm paper will count for 30% of the final grade for the class.
- Final Written Assignment (70%): At the end of the semester, students will submit a paper exploring in greater depth one of the topics covered in the class, or a topic related to the course but which was not examined directly over the course of the semester. In either case, the paper should examine some aspect of:
 - notions of Jewish nationhood;
 - Jewish nationalism and/or anti-nationalism;
 - efforts to create or conceptualize Jewish national attributes or life.

The final paper will constitute 70% of the final grade.

Due Date: July 31

Some General Guidelines for Writing papers (we will discuss more specific guidelines over the course of the semester):

- Begin with a clearly articulated research question—all writing begins with questions!
- Make sure to consider all of the sources related to the question.
- Read those sources carefully and critically; ask them questions, and confront them with one another. Careful, active, and creative reading is one of the most important pieces of serious research and writing.
- Explain in clear language what the central issues are that the sources address. When doing so, give examples and evidence by providing brief quotes.
- Remember: Your job is to make an argument, to present a case. Make sure to know what you are arguing, to articulate it clearly, and to back it up with evidence.
- CITE!—never forget to tell your reader where you are quoting from.

Class Schedule and Readings:

March 14: General Introduction

March 21: Who and What are the Jews?—Identity Crises and the Origins of Jewish Nationalism

Reading:

- Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*
- Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*

March 28—No Class

April 4: Origins of the Dilemma: The Jewish Encounter with Modernity

Reading:

- Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870*, (Schocken, 1973), 1-79.

April 18: Shaping responses: Jewish and non-Jewish

Reading:

- Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World—A Documentary History*, Second Edition (Oxford, 1995), 28-44; 125-26; 128-132.
- Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford, 1993) 3-36.

May 2: Preconditions to the rise of Jewish nationalism:

a. The Rise of Nationalism

- Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations”, in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York, 1996), 106-130.

b. The Emergence of Modern Antisemitism

- Excerpts from Richard Wagner, Wilhelm Marr, Karl Eugen Duehring, in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz (eds.) *The Jew in the Modern World*, 327-334.

c. Europe’s Rediscovery of the Holy Land

- “European Interest in Palestine”, from Alexander Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856-1882: Studies in Social, Economic and Political Development* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1993), pp. 47-75.

May 9: Forerunners of Zionism

Reading:

- Jacob Katz, "The Forerunners of Zionism", in *Essential Papers on Zionism* ed., Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (NYU Press, 1996), 33-45.
- Alkalai, Kalischer and Hess in Hertzberg, 103-139.

May 16: Turmoil in Europe and the Emergence of Zionism

Reading:

- Engel, ch. 2.
- Leo Pinsker, "Auto-Emancipation", in **Herzberg**, 179-98.

May 23: Midterm Paper due

May 23: The Problem of the Jews or a Jewish Problem: Between Herzl's Political Zionism and Ahad Ha'am's "Spiritual Zionism"

Reading:

- Herzl, "The Jewish State", in **Herzberg**, 201-226.
- Ahad Ha'am in **Hertzberg**, 249-51; 262-77.

May 30: Nation and Territory in Jewish Nationalism:

Reading:

- Shmuel Almog, "People and Land in Modern Jewish Nationalism", in *Essential Papers*, 46-62
- David Vital, "The Afflictions of the Jews and the Afflictions of Zionism: The Meaning and Consequences of the 'Uganda' Controversy", in *Essential Papers*, 119-132.

June 6: The Jewish Nation and Its Others—Zionism and the Arabs of Palestine

Reading:

- Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (Columbia, 1988), pp. 69-87; 232-34.
- Alan Dowty, "A Question That Outweighs All Others": Yitzhak Epstein and Zionist Recognition of the Arab Issue", *Israel Studies* 6:1 (2001), 34-54.
- Arie Saposnik, "Europe and its Orient in Zionist Culture before the First World War", *The Historical Journal* 49:4 (2006), pp. 1105–1123.

June 13: From Jew to Hebrew: Negotiating Religion, Language and Nationhood, Building a New Society

Reading:

- Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew*, 65-92.
- Hayyim Nahman Bialik on the Hebrew University, **Hertzberg**, 279-288.
- Berl Katznelson, "Revolution and Tradition", in **Hertzberg**, pp. 389-95.
- A. D. Gordon in Hertzberg, 369-374; 379-382.

June 20: Crises, Revolts and Independence: Implications and Challenges

Reading:

- **Engel**, ch. 5.
- Alan Arkush, "From Diaspora Nationalism to Radical Diasporism", *Modern Judaism* 29:3 (2009) 326-350.
- Anton Shamma, "At Half-Mast—Myths, Symbols, and Rituals of an Emerging State: A Personal Testimony of an 'Israeli Arab'", in Laurence J. Silberstein (ed.), *New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State* (NYU, 1991), 216-224.